A POSTSCRIPT

TO THE

HISTORY

OF

THE POLITICKS

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

CONTAINING

OBSERVATIONS ON THE LATE OVERTURES OF PEACE BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT.

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THE Hiſtory of the Politicks of Great Britain and France was finiſhed in Auguſt 1799, though, in conſequence of the author's reſidence abroad, and of ſeveral unforeſeen accidents, the publication of it in London could not take place before the middle of January 1800. In this interval, but at a time when it was too late to make any additions, a tranſaction has occurred, in which the parts reſpectively

taken by the Britiſh and French governments are diametrically oppoſite to thoſe which had before been taken by them. We have ſeen that the French National Convention not only declared war againſt Great Britain, but provoked it; and that it was continued by the French Directory, not becauſe they diſapproved the terms of peace propoſed by the Britiſh cabinet, but becauſe they were reſolved to make peace with Great Britain on no terms whatſoever; a reſolution which they formed in conſequence of the abſurd opinion, that they ſhould ſucceed in their attempt to reduce the Britiſh iſles to the ſame ſtate of abject dependency, as that to which Holland and Switzerland have been reduced. But Buonaparte, the preſent ſovereign of France, who, though not leſs ambitious, is endued with more ſenſe than his predeceſſors, and is well aware that the favourite ſcheme of ſubjugating Great Britain is impracticable, has thought proper to act on very different principles. He was alſo apprehenſive that, if he made no overtures of peace,

his newly aſſumed authority would ſoon be endangered; not only becauſe he is threatened on all ſides with a very formidable force, but becauſe the great body of the French themſelves, who have at length diſcovered, that they have been waſting their blood and treaſure, during the laſt eight years, for no other purpoſe than to gratify the ambition of their new maſters, might be diſpoſed to transfer their allegiance to another object, if he appeared as inexorable in the proſecution of the war againſt Great Britain as the Directory had been. On the other hand, a propoſal of peace neceſſarily furniſhed him with two grand advantages: for, in caſe of a refuſal, he hoped to tranquilliſe the people of France, and to excite diſcontents in Great Britain, by throwing the blame of the future continuation of hoſtilities on the Britiſh government. But, if the propoſal was received, he hoped to ſecure his authority, not only by treating with the kings of Europe on an equal footing, but by exciting the gratitude of his own ſubjects for the re-eſtabliſhment of peace, of which

they had been wantonly deprived by their former governors.

But there was another motive which operated ſtill more ſtrongly with Buonaparte, a motive which, though it was not obvious to every obſerver, did not eſcape the ſagacity of the Britiſh miniſters, and neceſſarily determined their conduct on the preſent occaſion. Buonaparte imagined that they would not venture to reject the overture *in limine*; becauſe he well knew, that by ſo doing they would expoſe themſelves to the following reproaches. " By re-" jecting all negotiation you evince a reſolution to " proſecute the war at all events, and to withhold " from a people groaning under the weight of taxes, " and the ſeverity of the preſent dearth, the bleſſ-" ings of peace which it is now in your power to " procure. By refuſing even to hear the terms " which the enemy intended to propoſe, you neg-" lect a favourable opportunity of obtaining con-" ditions to which France, under the preſent cir-

" cumſtances, might be diſpoſed to ſubmit, but
" which at a future period you may ſolicit in vain.
" At any rate you might have condeſcended, before
" you came to a final deciſion, to let the conſul of
" France deliver his terms of peace: and if they
" proved incompatible, either with the ſecurity of
" Great Britain, or with the claims which, under
" the preſent circumſtances, may be juſtly made, it
" would have been time enough even *then* to have
" rejected them." To theſe, and other ſimilar reproaches, Buonaparte well knew that the Britiſh miniſtry would expoſe themſelves in refuſing the proffered negotiation; and, therefore, whatever doubts he might entertain on the queſtion whether his terms would be acceptable to the Britiſh nation or not, he had probably none in regard to the queſtion whether government would permit him to propoſe them. But, if this permiſſion had been granted, he would have won the deep game which he was playing; and it would have been the lot of Britain to have paid the coſts.

In the firſt place, he foreſaw that the bare conſent, on the part of the Britiſh miniſtry, to enter into a negotiation with the conſul of France, would induce the emperor of Ruſſia inſtantly to withdraw his troops, which, in Germany alone, unleſs intervening events counteract the diſpoſitions already made, will ſoon amount to an hundred thouſand men. That this would have been the immediate conſequence, no one, who is acquainted with the character and the principles of the preſent emperor of Ruſſia, will doubt. But the dereliction of ſo powerful an ally would totally alter the nature of the terms, which we might juſtly expect, if we made peace in conjunction with him. For it muſt not be imagined that Buonaparte, who is no novice in the arts of negotiation, would have delivered his conditions of peace immediately and unequivocally. No! he would have protracted the final deciſion till the order for the return of the Ruſſians had been irrevocably given: and indeed the ordinary forms of negotiation, which, though he affects to

despise them, he can turn with great address to his own purpose, would have afforded him sufficient delay. Further, the Austrian cabinet, on perceiving that the British ministry had opened a negotiation, and that no further assistance was to be expected from Russia, would immediately have made proposals of a separate peace, as in the year 1797: and, to prevent the danger of being left alone to combat with the still enormous power of France, would have endeavoured to be beforehand with the British ministry in the conclusion of it. All this Buonaparte foresaw: and, as he could easily have protracted the negotiation with Great Britain till the preliminaries of peace had been signed with Austria, we should have been once more exposed to the necessity, either of carrying on the war alone without any prospect of its termination, or of submitting to the disadvantageous and dishonourable terms of peace which an haughty and inexorable enemy would think proper to impose. Such is the condition to which the consul of France, the subtlety.

of whoſe politicks ſurpaſſes even his talents for war, imagined by the propoſal of a ſeparate negotiation to reduce us. But, fortunately for Great Britain, our miniſters were too wiſe to be conducted into the ſnare: and, though their conduct may be cenſured by ſuperficial obſervers, it juſtly entitles them to the thanks of their country.

If all the forces which are now preparing to act againſt France had been at the diſpoſal of the Britiſh government, could the whole machine have been ſuſpended by its will, and by its will alone have again been ſet in motion, we might then with ſafety have liſtened to the terms which the enemy might condeſcend to propoſe. But ſince that very machine, from which alone we can expect a laſting and an honourable peace, would, under the preſent circumſtances, have not only been ſuſpended but deſtroyed by a bare conſent to negotiate, imperious neceſſity dictated the conduct which miniſters have

adopted. If gratitude for the ſupport of a powerful, a faithful, and *diſintereſted* ally *; if the fear of converting his friendſhip into enmity, by the taking of a ſtep which would be inconſiſtent with his avowed object in proſecuting the war; if the imprudence of trifling with a power which has ſo many claims to our regard, are conſiderations which one party may think unworthy of attention, yet all parties in Great Britain will probably unite in the ſentiment, that it is our buſineſs to combat at leaſt for our *own* intereſts. But when can we expect to find ſuch another opportunity of confining the power of France within its proper limits, and of ſecuring the future tranquillity of Great Britain, as that which preſents itſelf at this moment? Whatever may be the primary object of our allies (for it would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that they would fight *merely* for our ſakes), yet if the bare endeavours to attain that object neceſſarily tend to humiliate our moſt dangerous and moſt

* Th[illegible]peror of Ruſſia.

bitter enemy, it would be the height of folly to ſtop them in the midſt of their career. Whether the objects which the Britiſh cabinet has in view coincide in all reſpects with the objects of its allies or not, yet, ſince the purſuit of the latter as well as of the former contributes to the proſperity of the Britiſh empire, it is the duty of our miniſters to co-operate with all their power. If the emperor of Ruſſia ſucceeds in executing his avowed project, the Netherlands will be detached from France, and Holland will again be free: the turbulent ſpirit of French republican deſpotiſm, more abominable than the deſpotiſm of the eaſt, will no longer ſet fire to the four corners of Europe: and Great Britain, ſecured from the danger of an attack, may enjoy a long and uninterrupted peace. It is poſſible, indeed, that the efforts of the allies may not be crowned with the deſired ſucceſs; yet, when we conſider that the bare conſent to negotiate at preſent would not only have deprived us of all thoſe advan-

tages which we have reaſon, at leaſt, to expect from the next campaign, but would have reduced us to the condition in which we ſtood at the cloſe of 1797, we muſt acknowledge the propriety of a negative anſwer, if the probability of an honourable peace be preferable to the certainty of a diſgraceful one.

LEIPZIG, *January* 29, 1800.

THE END.

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